GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4161
ANSWERED ON:21.12.2005
INDIAN GESTURE FOR EARTHQUAKE AFFECTED PEOPLE
Jagannath Dr. M.;Kathiria Dr. Vallabhbhai

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government offered all help to earthquake affected people of Pakistan including the formation of a Joint group for relief in the border areas;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government also offered the participation of Indian helicopters in relief operations in the quake hit areas of Pakistan side of the Line of Control as some of the quake hit villages were more accessible from the Indian side;

(d) if so, whether Pakistan refused to accept this gesture of the Indian Government;

(e) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(f) the reaction of the Union Government thereto?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a) - (f) India has assured the Government and the people of Pakistan affected by the earthquake of 8 October its support in relief and rehabilitation efforts. Government have announced an official assistance of $ 25 million which is available to Pakistan for sourcing supplies of building material such as cement, steel and other items from India, as also the technology available in India for prefabricated earthquake resistant shelters. The assistance is also available for building homes and rehabilitating people, reconstructing the infrastructure and restoring essential services. The official assistance sent so far is about 1300 tonnes of relief material. A number of private agencies have also sent relief material with Government approval. India has also opened five crossing points on the Line of Control (LoC) for the movement of people and relief material.

Prompt over flight clearances have been accorded for relief planes of other countries. Pakistan`s rescue helicopters have been allowed to fly in the `no-fly zone` close to the LoC with permission, as a special gesture. Special telephone centers have been opened on the Indian side of the LoC to provide free calls by Indians to their relatives in Pakistan/Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Foreign organisations are also being allowed to source supplies from India. The High Commission of Pakistan in New Delhi has been permitted to source supplies of relief material from India and to open a bank account to receive cash donations from Indians to send to Pakistan.

India also made offers of helicopters, relief camps, cross-LoC joint relief operations, medical relief teams and repair of telecom infrastructure. However, these were not accepted by Pakistan. Later, Pakistan agreed to accept Indian helicopters but without Indian pilots or crew, on the ground of `sensitivities` involved. India did not accept this condition and has not sent helicopters without pilots or crew for relief work to Pakistan/Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.